

Sustainable Fishing – Secure Livelihoods in BELIZE

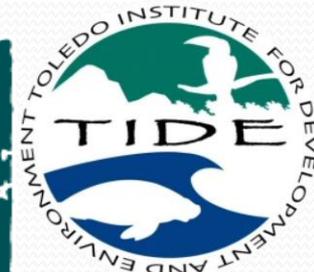


Finding the ways that work

Celia Mahung
Toledo Institute for Development & Environment
(TIDE) Belize

+ 501 722-2274

cmahung@tidebelize.org www.tidebelize.org



Belize – Open Access Fishery

- ✓ Historically – small country - any Belizean could access a fishing license – abundance in resources
- ✓ Growing population – increased number of fishers – need to manage marine resource
- ✓ Ongoing problem with trans-boundary fishing
- ✓ Fish stocks (commercial species) that contribute significantly to economy were beginning to decline
- ✓ Conscious of collapse of fishery in neighboring countries
- ✓ Fishers and management authorities expressed concern and need for action!
- ✓ We wanted to ensure that **people who traditionally depended on fishing could fish for life!**

Belize – Management of Fishery

- Network of Marine Reserves (restrictions)
- Spawning aggregation sites
- Ban on Trawling
- Size limits for some commercial species
- Open and Closed Seasons (commercial species)
- When industries were not doing well – unemployment high - workers resorted to fishing
- Realization that existing fisheries mgt. regulations - insufficient to secure livelihood of fishers!

What is Managed Access?

Fisheries management tool used to ensure that

- ❖ Access to commercial fishing in GUZ of marine reserves (PHMR and GRMR) is primarily available to traditional users so they continue to benefit from this resource!
- ❖ Catch data collected by fishers and managers is used to inform the management of the marine reserves
- ❖ The livelihood of traditional fishers is secured resulting in stewardship of the natural resources

Managed Access – Securing Livelihood of traditional fishers!

- Though the initiative was led by the Fisheries Dept. – inclusive of partners and community representatives
- Community Managed Access Committees formed to vet application of MA fishing licenses – make recommendations to Fisheries Administrator – approves/disapproves licenses
- Communities – empowered by participating at the highest level of decision making
- Sustainable fishing and stewardship of marine resources – goal!

Managed Access Piloted in 2 Sites

- Port Honduras Marine Reserve & Glovers Reef Marine Reserve –southern Belize - 2011
- Sites have strong management (partners EDF/Fisheries Dept. and other donors willing to invest in pilot program)
- Prior to piloting – series of community meetings to get input for final design (2 yrs.)
- Meetings with government officials, fishing associations, fishing cooperatives, advisory councils and media shows

Formation of Managed Access Task Force to plan for implementation of Managed Access



Criteria to obtain MA License

- History of fishing commercially in marine reserve – have valid fisher-folk license
- Evidence of living in Belize and selling products in Belize
- Submit catch data
- Past infractions – not considered for first issuance of licenses
- Use of marine reserve at least 6 times per year!

Community Managed Access Committees

- Vet Managed Access License applications
- Make recommendations for issuance of licenses
- Link between the Fisheries Dept. and communities
- Help to monitor implementation of Managed Access
- Make recommendations for improved implementation of Managed Access
- Ensure transparency – issuance of licenses!

Assessment – funded by EDF and MARFUND

- Preliminary assessment of MA implementation – recommends national roll out of program
- Indicate that there is decline of illegal activities
- 100% of fishers say they are benefiting from marine reserve
- Emphasize the need for ongoing enforcement at night
- Though some fishers submit data – need for 100% data submission and for data to be accurately documented
- Most fishers felt that their suggestions – incorporated in design
- Need to address recreational fishing in marine reserves

Lessons Learned

- Use a variety of strategies to communicate with fishers
 - do not depend on formal sessions alone – reach out to focus groups and individuals - repetition is critical!
- Some fishers expect license to be automatic – think they have a right to the resource - don't see the need to apply for a license!
- Some fishers do not provide accurate data – others do not see the need to provide data!
- Enforcement of fishing regulations is critical

Lessons Learned

- A country must take bold steps to protect its resources!
- Never expect everyone to be on board when you start a new initiative!
- Community involvement in decision making – critical
- Help communities to see how they benefit economically from the natural resources!
- When you limit use of a resource – offer supplemental livelihood opportunities
- Use people who have the power of influence to help you achieve your goals – not only government officials but also local leaders

Future of Managed Access

- National Roll out to all Marine Reserves in Belize within 3 year period
- Lessons learned from pilot phase – used in new Managed Access Design
- Using different strategies – using partners RARE and EDF to work on communication – wider target audience!
- Training of staff for implementation of program
- Revisiting data collection protocols

Thank You!

